

## CLAIMS

What I claim is:

1. A method of preparing a food item, said method comprising the steps of:  
cooking said food item; and  
after cooking said food item, injecting a condiment into an interior portion of said food item.
  
2. The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item comprises:  
injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item until said food item is at least 5% filled with said condiment.
  
3. The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item comprises:  
injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item until said food item is at least 10% filled with said condiment.
  
4. The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item comprises:  
injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item until said food item is at least 15% filled with said condiment.
  
5. The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item comprises:  
injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item until said food item is at least 20% filled with said condiment.

6. The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item comprises:

injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item until said food item is at least 25% filled with said condiment.

7. The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item comprises:

making a hole in an exterior surface of said food item; and  
injecting said condiment through said hole and into said interior portion of said food item.

8. The method of Claim 7, wherein said hole is dimensioned to restrict the flow of condiment out of said interior portion of said food item.

9. The method of Claim 7, wherein a maximum width of said hole is less than 0.2 inches.

10. The method of Claim 7, wherein a maximum width of said hole is less than 0.1 inches.

11. The method of Claim 7, wherein a maximum width of said hole is less than 0.05 inches.

12. The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item comprises:

piercing an exterior surface of said food item with an injection nozzle; and  
transferring said condiment through said injection nozzle and into said interior portion of said food item.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein a maximum width of the portion of said injection nozzle that is used to pierce said food item is less than 0.1 inches.

14. The method of Claim 12, wherein a maximum width of the portion of said injection nozzle that is used to pierce said food item is less than 0.05 inches.

15. The method of Claim 1, further comprising preheating said condiment before said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item.

16. The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item comprises:

piercing an exterior surface of said food item a first time with an injection nozzle;  
substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said food item said first time with said injection nozzle, injecting a first portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said food item;

piercing said exterior surface of said food item a second time with said injection nozzle; and

substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said food item said second time with said injection nozzle, injecting a second portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said food item.

17. The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item comprises:

piercing an exterior surface of said food item with a first injection nozzle;  
substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said food item said first time with said first injection nozzle, injecting a first portion of said condiment from said first injection nozzle into said interior portion of said food item;

piercing said exterior surface of said food item with a second injection nozzle, said second injection nozzle being different from said first injection nozzle; and

substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said food item with said second injection nozzle, injecting a second portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said food item.

18. The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of cooking said food item comprises deep frying said food item.
19. The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of cooking said food item comprises baking said food item.
20. The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said food item comprises using an automated device to inject said condiment into said interior portion of said food item in a substantially automated manner.
21. The method of Claim 1, wherein said food item is a hash brown.
22. The method of Claim 21, wherein said condiment is ketchup.
23. The method of Claim 1, wherein said food item is a French toast stick.
24. The method of Claim 23, wherein said condiment is syrup.
25. The method of Claim 1, wherein said food item is a pancake.
26. The method of Claim 25, wherein said condiment is syrup.
27. The method of Claim 1, wherein said condiment is cheese sauce.
28. The method of Claim 1, wherein said condiment is barbecue sauce.
29. The method of Claim 1, wherein said condiment is ranch dressing.
39. The method of Claim 1, wherein said condiment is gravy.

40. The method of Claim 1, wherein said condiment is hot sauce.

41. A method of preparing a French fry, said comprising the steps of:  
cooking said French fry; and  
after cooking said French fry, injecting a condiment into an interior portion of  
said French fry.

42. The method of Claim 41, wherein said step of injecting said condiment  
into said interior portion of said French fry comprises:  
injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry until said  
French fry is at least 5% filled with said condiment.

42. The method of Claim 41, wherein said step of injecting said condiment  
into said interior portion of said French fry comprises:  
injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry until said  
French fry is at least 10% filled with said condiment.

43. The method of Claim 41, wherein said step of injecting said condiment  
into said interior portion of said French fry comprises:  
injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry until said  
French fry is at least 15% filled with said condiment.

44. The method of Claim 41, wherein said step of injecting said condiment  
into said interior portion of said French fry comprises:  
injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry until said  
French fry is at least 20% filled with said condiment.

45. The method of Claim 41, wherein said step of injecting said condiment  
into said interior portion of said French fry comprises:  
injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry until said  
French fry is at least 25% filled with said condiment.

46. The method of Claim 41, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry comprises:

making a hole in an exterior surface of said French fry; and  
injecting said condiment through said hole and into said interior portion of said French fry.

47. The method of Claim 46, wherein said hole is dimensioned to restrict the flow of condiment out of said interior portion of said French fry.

48. The method of Claim 46, wherein a maximum width of said hole is less than 0.2 inches.

49. The method of Claim 46, wherein a maximum width of said hole is less than 0.1 inches.

50. The method of Claim 46, wherein a maximum width of said hole is less than 0.05 inches.

51. The method of Claim 41, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry comprises:

piercing an exterior surface of said French fry with an injection nozzle; and  
transferring said condiment through said injection nozzle and into said interior portion of said French fry.

52. The method of Claim 51, wherein a maximum width of the portion of the injection nozzle that is used to pierce said French fry is less than 0.1 inches.

53. The method of Claim 51, wherein a maximum width of the portion of the injection nozzle that is used to pierce said French fry is less than 0.05 inches.

54. The method of Claim 41, further comprising preheating said condiment before said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry.

55. The method of Claim 41, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry comprises:

piercing an exterior surface of said French fry a first time with an injection nozzle;

substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said French fry said first time with said injection nozzle, injecting a first portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry;

piercing said exterior surface of said French fry a second time with said injection nozzle; and

substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said French fry said second time with said injection nozzle, injecting a second portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry.

56. The method of Claim 41, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry comprises:

piercing an exterior surface of said French fry with a first injection nozzle;

substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said French fry with said first injection nozzle, injecting a first portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry;

piercing said exterior surface of said French fry with a second injection nozzle, said second injection nozzle being different from said first injection nozzle; and

substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said French fry with said second injection nozzle, injecting a second portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry.

57. The method of Claim 41, wherein said step of cooking said French fry comprises deep frying said French fry.

58. The method of Claim 41, wherein said step of cooking said French fry comprises baking said French fry.

59. The method of Claim 41, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry comprises using an automated device to inject said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry in a substantially automated manner.

60. The method of Claim 41, wherein said condiment is cheese sauce.

61. The method of Claim 41, wherein said condiment is barbeque sauce.

62. The method of Claim 41, wherein said condiment is ranch dressing.

63. The method of Claim 41, wherein said condiment is gravy.

64. The method of Claim 41, wherein said condiment is hot sauce.

65. A method of injecting condiment into a plurality of French fries from within a single cooked batch of French fries, said method comprising using a substantially automated device to perform the steps of:

piercing, with an injection nozzle, an exterior surface of a first French fry from said single batch of French fries;

substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said first French fry with an injection nozzle, injecting a first portion of said condiment into an interior portion of said first French fry;

piercing, with an injection nozzle, an exterior surface of a second French fry from said single batch of French fries; and

substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said second French fry with an injection nozzle, injecting a second portion of said condiment into an interior portion of said second French fry.

66. The method of Claim 65, wherein said step of injecting said first portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said first French fry is executed at substantially the same time as said step of injecting said second portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said second French fry.

67. The method of Claim 65, wherein both said step of injecting said first portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said first French fry and said step of injecting said second portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said second French fry are executed substantially immediately after said single batch of French fries is cooked.

68. The method of Claim 67, wherein both said step of injecting said first portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said first French fry and said step of injecting said second portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said second French fry are executed substantially immediately after said single batch of French fries is deep fried.

69. The method of Claim 67, wherein both said step of injecting said first portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said first French fry and said step of injecting said second portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said second French fry are executed within five minutes after said single batch of French fries is cooked.

70. A method of preparing a serving of French fries, said serving of French fries comprising a plurality of French fries, said method comprising:

cooking said serving of French fries; and

after said step of cooking said serving of French fries, using an automated French fry injection device to inject, in a substantially automated manner, each of said plurality of French fries with a condiment.

71. The method of Claim 70, wherein said plurality of French fries comprises at least five French fries.

72. The method of Claim 70, wherein said step of using an automated French fry injection device to inject each of said plurality of French fries with a condiment comprises:

using a sensor to detect the presence of a particular one of said plurality of French fries; and

in response to said sensor detecting said presence of said particular French fry, injecting said particular French fry with said condiment.

73. The method of Claim 72, wherein said sensor is a temperature sensor.

74. A method of injecting condiment into a French fry, said method comprising the steps of:

inserting a dispensing portion of an elongate injection nozzle through an exterior surface of a French fry;

positioning said injection nozzle into an "injection position" in which said dispensing portion of said injection nozzle is within an interior portion of said French fry and in which said injection nozzle will direct condiment generally toward a lateral end of said French fry; and

after said step of positioning said injection nozzle into said "injection position" and while said nozzle is in said "injection position", injecting condiment through said injection nozzle and into said interior portion of said French fry.

75. The method of Claim 74, wherein a central axis of said injection nozzle and an exterior surface of said French fry form an angle of less than 75 degrees when said injection nozzle is in said injection position.

76. The method of Claim 74, wherein a central axis of said injection nozzle and an exterior surface of said French fry form an angle of less than 60 degrees when said injection nozzle is in said injection position.

77. The method of Claim 74, wherein a central axis of said injection nozzle and an exterior surface of said French fry form an angle of less than 45 degrees when said injection nozzle is in said injection position.

78. The method of Claim 74, wherein a central axis of said injection nozzle and an exterior surface of said French fry form an angle of less than 30 degrees when said injection nozzle is in said injection position.

79. A method of preparing a breakfast food item, said method comprising the steps of:

cooking said breakfast food item; and  
after cooking said breakfast food item, injecting a condiment into an interior portion of said breakfast food item.

80. The method of Claim 79, wherein said condiment is syrup.

81. The method of Claim 79, wherein said breakfast food item is a French toast stick.

82. The method of Claim 79, wherein said breakfast food item is a pancake.

83. The method of Claim 79, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said breakfast food item comprises:

injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said breakfast food item until said breakfast food item is at least 3% filled with condiment.

84. The method of Claim 79, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said breakfast food item comprises:

injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said breakfast food item until said breakfast food item is at least 5% filled with condiment.

85. The method of Claim 79, wherein said step of injecting syrup into said interior portion of said breakfast food item comprises:

making a hole in an exterior surface of said breakfast food item; and  
injecting said condiment through said hole and into said interior portion of said breakfast food item.

86. The method of Claim 79, wherein said hole is dimensioned to restrict the flow of condiment out of said interior portion of said breakfast food item.

87. The method of Claim 86, wherein said breakfast food item is a French toast stick.

88. The method of Claim 86, wherein said breakfast food item is a pancake.

89. The method of Claim 85, wherein a maximum width of said hole is less than 0.2 inches.

90. The method of Claim 85, wherein a maximum width of said hole is less than 0.1 inches.

91. The method of Claim 85, wherein a maximum width of said hole is less than 0.05 inches.

92. The method of Claim 79, wherein said step of injecting a condiment into said interior portion of said breakfast food item comprises:

piercing an exterior surface of said breakfast food item with an injection nozzle;  
and

transferring said condiment through said injection nozzle and into said interior portion of said breakfast food item.

93. The method of Claim 92, wherein a maximum width of the portion of the injection nozzle that is used to pierce said breakfast food item is less than 0.1 inches.

94. The method of Claim 79, further comprising preheating said condiment before said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said breakfast food item.

95. The method of Claim 79, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said breakfast food item comprises:

piercing an exterior surface of said breakfast food item a first time with an injection nozzle;

substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said breakfast food item said first time with said injection nozzle, injecting a first portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said breakfast food item;

piercing said exterior surface of said breakfast food item a second time with said injection nozzle; and

substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said breakfast food item said second time with said injection nozzle, injecting a second portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said breakfast food item.

96. The method of Claim 79, wherein said step of injecting said condiment into said interior portion of said breakfast food item comprises:

piercing an exterior surface of said breakfast food item with a first injection nozzle;

substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said breakfast food item with said first injection nozzle, injecting a first portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said breakfast food item;

piercing said exterior surface of said breakfast food item with a second injection nozzle, said second injection nozzle being different from said first injection nozzle; and

substantially immediately after piercing said exterior surface of said breakfast food item with said second injection nozzle, injecting a second portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said French fry.

97. The method of Claim 96, wherein said step of injecting said first portion of said condiment, and said step of injecting said second portion of said condiment are executed at substantially the same time.

98. The method of Claim 96, wherein said step of injecting said first portion of said condiment into said interior portion of said breakfast food item is executed within a minute after said step of piercing the exterior surface of said breakfast food item with a first injection nozzle.

99. The method of Claim 79, wherein said step of cooking said breakfast food item comprises frying said breakfast food item.